

September 2019



KEN BURKE

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
AND COMPTROLLER

VOICE

**You Have A
VOICE
Report
Cybercrime**

FRAUD ALERT

SIGN UP TODAY and receive free alerts when a document with your name is recorded in Official Records. Protect yourself from fraud. **CLICK HERE.**

GET IN TOUCH:

Write:

Public Integrity Unit
Division of Inspector General
Fraud Hotline
510 Bay Avenue
Clearwater, FL 33756

Call:

(727) 45FRAUD
(727) 453-7283

Fax:

(727) 464-8386

E-mail:

fraudhotline@mypinellasclerk.org

Internet:

www.mypinellasclerk.org
www.twitter.com/pinellasig
www.facebook.com/igpinellas

Aftermath of Hurricane Dorian Brings Out Disaster Scammers

One of the unfortunate byproducts of almost any disaster is a scam artist who tries to take advantage of people's generosity and desire to help others. Hurricane Dorian is no exception.

"We want to encourage those that want to give and help. Lives were lost, property was destroyed, it's so important that we help our neighbors," Attorney General Ashley Moody said in a press release.

At the same time, there are often people that want to take advantage and scam Floridians and take their hard-earned money when they are just trying to help. Avoid solicitors using high pressure tactics that persuade you to give. Determine whether a charity is legitimate by visiting Charity Navigator: Your Guide to Intelligent Giving at <https://www.charitynavigator.org/> and make sure that when you are evaluating what charity to give to, you are asking questions.

According to Consumer Protection, all charities soliciting within Florida — excluding religious, educational, and government entities — are required to register and file financial information with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

To check whether a charitable organization is properly registered, visit the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at <https://www.fdacs.gov/> or call 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352).

Consumer Protection offers some additional advice:

- Always be wary of people soliciting on behalf of victims of natural disasters.
- Do not judge an organization based solely on its name.
- Ask for a copy of the charity's financial report to determine how much of your contribution is going toward the cause, and how much for administrative and fundraising costs.
- Beware of pressure tactics to give immediately. Do not let emotional appeals or photos persuade you into giving.
- Some charitable groups employ paid solicitors, in which case not all of your donation will go to the charitable cause.
- Ask if donations are tax deductible.
- Never give cash. Contribute by check made payable to the organization, never to an individual's name.

For tips on how to safely donate after a disaster, visit www.pinellascounty.org/consumer/charities.htm. To report suspected fraud, call (727) 464-6200.

Source: Tampa Bay Newspaper



For more information or to file a complaint, contact Pinellas County Consumer Protection at (727) 464-6200 or visit www.pinellascounty.org/consumer.